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NSC BRIEFING : THE SOVIET DILEMMA IN ALGERIA

25X1A

I. The Soviet dilemma in Algeria is to uphold the principle of anti-colonialism without antagonizing the French.

A. Support for people resisting colonialism is fundamental to the well

advertised Soviet policy, and Moscow cannot afford to appear to be

abandoning it. This would hurt the Soviet position in all of Asia and

(as applies to Algeria) particularly in the Middle East.

B. Moscow considers France the weak link in NATO, recognizes the extent of

anti-American feeling current in France, and hopes to win France away

from ~~her~~ a firm alliance with the West--particularly on such issues as

disarmament. But France is very sensitive on the North African

question.

II. This dilemma is evident in the shifting position of the French Communist party.

A. ~~In the past it has~~ adhered firmly to the principle of independence for

Algeria, until last October.

B. In October it shifted to emphasize independence within the French Union for the North African possessions.

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C. Recent French Communist propaganda has emphasized the links between France and Algeria ~~and~~ and has avoided talking about independence.

D. The French Communist party supported premier Mollet on 12 March in the votes of confidence giving him broad powers in Algeria. This also served the purpose of maintaining the illusion of a popular front by helping to keep the Socialist-led government in power.

III. Soviet diplomacy has also shown increasing concern over French sensitivity on North Africa, since the French leaders canceled their original visit to Moscow following the Soviet vote for a discussion of Algerian in the UN last fall.

A. Khrushchev in October issued an ambiguous statement expressing hope for a solution of the North African question which would take into account the rights and interests of the peoples of the French Union while stressing Soviet "moral support and sympathy with national liberation aspirations of peoples."

B. A Soviet diplomat elaborated on that, said the USSR wanted France to retain her position in North Africa because it discovered in Indochina that when France moves out of an area the Americans move in.

25X6

IV. After Faure and Pina~~y~~ cancelled their Moscow trip last October, a Soviet diplomat indicated that the Soviet leaders would have liked to discuss North Africa with the French. The subject will probably come up during the Mollet-Pineau visit now scheduled for mid-May.

A. The USSR's problem is to maneuver carefully so as to convert ~~their~~ *its* dilemma in Algeria into an opportunity--to convince the French of its sympathy while maintaining its public posture as a foe of colonialism.

IV. Ambassador Dillon, ~~was~~ obliged to counter rising anti-Americanism, affirmed

American support for France's North African policy on 20 March.

A. ~~Initial~~ ^{official and press} ~~press~~ response very favorable.

B. Unfavorable Moslem reaction anticipated

C. Later French reaction may be more tempered. More inclination to judge

words of speech in terms of concrete assistance offered.